

Awareness and Utilization of Information Sources among the International Students of Punjabi University Patiala: A Study

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ABSTRACT-

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The main objective of this study is to evaluate the awareness and utilization of information sources among the international students studying at Punjabi University Patiala (PUP), India. This study focuses on the use of various library resources available in the Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library of PUP. A survey method was adopted for the data collection. The questionnaire was designed to assess the information needs, purpose of library visits, use of resources, and difficulties in getting the required information. The study shows that most of the respondents come from the Asia region, followed by Africa. Most of the students are aware of books and research reports, but they are less aware of audio-visual materials. Books are the most commonly used information source. Slow internet speed and the limited number of computers are some major barriers that affect international students' ability to acquire the needed information. The most common suggestion of this study is that a multilingual system should be adopted in the library.

Keywords: Information Sources, International Students, Punjabi University, Academic Library, User Study, Awareness and Use, Information Needs, Information Barriers

INTRODUCTION

Students who study in a country other than their home country are referred to as 'international students' or 'foreign students'. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), international or internationally mobile students are "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin." From ancient Bharat to modern India, higher education has always occupied a place of prominence in Indian history. Nalanda, Taxila, and Vikramsila universities were the pinnacles of higher learning in ancient times, attracting students from all over the world. Today, India manages one of the largest higher education systems in the world (UGC, 2020). According to the AISHE 2020-21 Report, 4.13 crore students were enrolled in India. Of these, 2.12 crore (51.3%) were male students, while 2.01 crore (48.7%) were female candidates. Overall, 211852 PhD students were enrolled in various institutions, which is 0.51% of the total enrolled students. During this period, the number of international students was 48,035 or about 0.12% of the total number of students enrolled in higher education. These students were from 163 different countries.

The majority of international students studying in India come from Asian and African countries such as Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sudan, Nigeria, Yemen, Kenya, Zambia, and Ethiopia, among others.

Understanding the importance of international students, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (now the Ministry of Education) of the Government of India, launched the 'Study in India' initiative in April 2018. The initiative's main goals include increasing the number of international students in India, increasing India's market share of global education exports from less than 1% to 2%, and improving India's global ranking as an educational destination (PIB, 2018). The PRAGATI Exam, or "Performance Rating of Applicants through Global Aptitude Test for Indian Institutes," is being held to award scholarships to international students participating in the Study in India programme. The National Education Policy 2020 also takes a step towards the internationalisation of higher education. The NEP 2020 proposes a legislative framework that allows foreign universities to operate in India and, similarly, encourages high-performing Indian universities to set up campuses in other countries (India, 2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International students play an important role in the growth of any academic institution. They undoubtedly increase the social and cultural diversity of the institute and improve its global reputation. Beine et al. (2014) find out that international students strongly benefit the host countries as well as the academic institutions. Singh et al. (2015) conducted an investigation into the information needs and information seeking behaviour of foreign students at Delhi University and discovered that the majority of the students sought information via the internet. According to Yoon and Chung (2017), the Internet and people (relatives or friends) are important sources of information for international students. Hughes et al. (2018) discovered that domestic and international students have similar and sometimes contradictory emotions. According to Ibrahim and Perumal

(2018), foreign students require information on academic, daily life, and entertainment topics, among other things. The differences between domestic students and international students are more remarkable in the barriers than in the information needs (Sin & Kim, 2018). Shrestha (2018) revealed that the majority of foreign students use the internet and the university library to get desired information but continuously face problems due to the language barrier and difficulties in the online system. Hertzum and Hyldegrd (2019) concluded that study-related information needs were more important for international students, whereas it was more difficult to resolve everyday information needs. According to Arandas, Ling, and Sannusi (2021), some of the obstacles faced by international students include poor hostel conditions, discrimination, and social isolation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the information needs of international students and their awareness and use of various information sources available at Punjabi University Patiala. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To measure the information needs of international students.
- To know the frequency and purpose of library visits.
- To find out the awareness of various information resources.
- To measure the frequency of usage of information sources.
- To assess the satisfaction level of international students regarding information resources
- To inquire about the barriers or problems faced by international students in using resources
- To suggest possible measures for improving library services and enhancing the use of resources.

METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was designed to evaluate the international students' experiences of using libraries, such as frequency of library visits, purpose of visits, awareness of library resources, satisfaction

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents

Demographic Variable		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	75.4
	Female	15	24.6
Age Group	18-22	6	9.8
	23-27	23	37.7
	28-32	24	39
	33-37	6	9.8
	38-42	2	3.8
Level of study	UG	25	41
	PG	25	41
	PhD	11	18
English Proficiency	Excellent	37	60.7
	Good	24	39.3

Table 2: Country-wise International students

Sr. No.	Country	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Afghanistan	27	44.3
2.	Ethiopia	07	11.5
3.	Ghana	04	6.6
4.	Nepal	04	6.6
5.	Kenya	03	4.9
6.	South Sudan	03	4.9
7.	Nigeria	02	3.3
8.	Bangladesh, Gambia, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Uganda (01 each)	11	18

level regarding resources, etc. The questionnaire was prepared on a Google Form, as the respondents were interested in giving their inputs in online mode and found it convenient. The questionnaire was sent

through email to 127 undergraduates, postgraduates, and PhD students studying in various departments of the university. The students were made aware that their participation in the survey was voluntary

Table 3: Field of Study

Field of Study	Number	Percentage
Commerce and Management	22	36.1
Social Sciences	13	21.3
Engineering & Technology	11	18
Others	15	24.6

Table 4: Activity for Information Needs of respondents

Activity	Frequency				
	Always %age (n)	Often %age (n)	Sometimes %age (n)	Occasionally %age (n)	Never %age (n)
Consult with teachers/supervisor(s)	34.4 (21)	29.5 (18)	31.1 (19)	4.9 (3)	0 (0)
Use the Internet	60.7 (37)	23 (14)	13.1 (8)	1.6 (1)	1.6 (1)
Ask classmates/friends	26.2 (16)	31.1 (19)	31.1 (19)	11.5 (7)	0 (0)
Browse library catalogues/OPAC	14.8 (9)	23 (14)	24.6 (15)	19.7 (12)	18 (11)
Ask the librarian/library staff	8.2 (5)	19.7 (12)	18 (11)	26.2 (16)	27.9 (17)
Refer books	14.8 (9)	19.7 (12)	26.2 (16)	18 (11)	11.5 (7)
Use library e-resources/databases	14.8 (9)	24.6 (15)	23 (14)	9.8 (6)	27.9 (17)

and not time bound. The data were collected over a period of 30 days during the session 2022-23. Out of 127, a total 61 (response rate: 48%) valid questionnaires were collected and considered for final analysis. The collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel software and presented in tabular form.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The present study is limited to the international students studying at Punjabi University Patiala (India) who were enrolled during the session 2022-23. International students studying at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD levels were considered for the study.

Singnificance of the Study

There has been a vast research literature that explores the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of international students and their use of library resources and services. However, in India, very few studies have been undertaken in this particular field. Since international students have different backgrounds, their needs for information can be different from those of domestic students. A study to ascertain the information needs will help to take measures to improve the information services provided by libraries and help to provide need-based information to international students. For this reason, the user studies of international students are

Table 5: Frequency of Library Visit

Frequency of visit	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	13	21.3
Once in a week	13	21.3
Twice a week	9	14.8
Monthly	1	1.6
Whenever it is required	23	37.7
Never	2	3.3

Table 6: Purpose of Visiting Library

Purpose	Frequency				
	Always %age (n)	Often %age (n)	Sometimes %age (n)	Occasionally %age (n)	Never %age (n)
To getting books issue/return	21.3 (13)	23 (14)	27.9 (17)	18 (11)	9.8 (6)
To consult reference sources	9.8 (6)	34.4 (21)	23 (14)	24.6 (15)	8.2 (5)
To study books	31.1 (19)	24.6 (15)	26.2 (16)	11.5 (7)	6.6 (4)
For consulting journals	19.7 (12)	14.8 (9)	32.8 (20)	14.8 (9)	18 (11)
To read newspapers	4.9 (3)	9.8 (6)	27.9 (17)	23 (14)	34.4 (21)
To write research paper	27.9 (17)	26.2 (16)	24.6 (15)	11.5 (7)	9.8 (6)
To use e-resources	14.8 (9)	29.5 (18)	18 (11)	14.8 (9)	23 (14)
To browse the Internet	19.7 (12)	18 (11)	16.4 (10)	14.8 (9)	31.1 (19)

of great significance. The outcomes of this study would be helpful for the library professionals at Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University Patiala as well as for others.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The first part of the questionnaire was aimed at the demographic and other background information of

the sample. The frequency and percentage distribution of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Socio-Demographic profile

Table 1 shows that among the 61 respondents, more than 75% are male, while about 25% are female students. Most of the respondents fall into the age groups of 23-27 and 28-32. The

Table 7: Awareness and use of Information Sources

Information Sources	Awareness		Frequency of Use				
	Yes %age (n)	No %age (n)	Always %age (n)	Often %age (n)	Sometimes %age (n)	Occasionally %age (n)	Never %age (n)
Journals	67.2 (41)	32.8 (20)	14.8 (9)	24.6(15)	18 (11)	9.8 (6)	32.8 (20)
E-journals	57.4 (35)	42.6 (26)	16.4 (10)	24.6 (15)	11.5 (7)	11.5 (7)	36 (22)
Books	95.1 (58)	4.9 (03)	41 (25)	31.1 (19)	9.8 (6)	9.8 (6)	8.2 (5)
E-books	65.6 (40)	34.4 (21)	32.8 (20)	19.7 (12)	16.4 (10)	4.9 (3)	26.2 (16)
Reference materials	73.8 (45)	26.2 (16)	21.3 (13)	19.7 (12)	26.2 (16)	19.7 (12)	13.1 (8)
Online databases	52.5 (32)	47.5 (29)	18 (11)	16.4 (10)	18 (11)	18 (11)	29.5 (18)
Thesis/dissertations	68.9 (42)	31.1 (19)	18 (11)	18 (11)	24.6 (15)	14.8 (9)	24.6 (15)
Research reports	77 (47)	23 (14)	18 (11)	27.9 (17)	16.4 (10)	16.4 (10)	21.3 (13)
Audio-visual material	24.6 (15)	75.4 (46)	3.3 (2)	11.5 (7)	11.5 (7)	18 (11)	55.7 (34)
Conference proceedings	27.9 (17)	72.1 (44)	4.9 (3)	11.5 (7)	18 (11)	16.4 (10)	49.2 (30)
Standards and patents	27.9 (17)	72.1 (44)	3.3 (2)	16.4 (10)	13.1 (8)	9.8 (6)	57.4 (35)

percentage of postgraduate students and research scholars is 41% (n=25) both, while 18% (n=11) respondents are undergraduate students. The table shows that most of the international students are excellent as far as their English proficiency is concerned.

Country-wise International Students

Table 2 shows that most of the international students (55.7%, n=34) come from the Asia region, followed by African countries. These students are from 17 countries, including Afghanistan (27), followed by Ethiopia (07), Ghana and Nepal (04) each, Kenya and South Sudan (04) each, and Nigeria (02) respondents.

Field of Study

Table 3 indicates that most of the international students are enrolled in commerce and management, followed by social sciences, engineering, and technology. The rest of the students, 24.6% (n=15) are studying in the arts, humanities and other fields of study.

Activity for getting the needed Information

When international students needed information related to their course, they preferred the use of the internet and consulted with teachers or supervisors. Table 4 shows that the majority of the students always consult with their teachers or supervisors regarding their information needs. The table

Table 8: Satisfaction Level about Information Sources

Resource	Level of Satisfaction				
	Very satisfied %age (n)	Satisfied %age (n)	Neutral %age (n)	Dissatisfied %age (n)	Very dissatisfied %age (n)
Journals	23 (14)	37.7 (23)	34.4 (21)	3.3 (2)	1.6 (1)
E-journals	24.6 (15)	27.9 (17)	36 (22)	9.8 (6)	1.6 (1)
Books	36 (22)	41 (25)	16.4 (10)	3.3 (2)	3.3 (2)
E-books	27.9 (17)	34.4 (21)	29.5 (18)	4.9 (3)	3.3 (2)
Reference Materials	16.4 (10)	36 (22)	37.7 (23)	6.6 (4)	3.3 (2)
Thesis/Dissertations	23 (14)	26.2 (16)	41 (25)	6.6 (4)	3.3 (2)
Audio/Visual Material	6.6 (4)	13.1 (8)	67.2 (41)	1.6 (1)	11.5 (7)
Conference Proceedings	9.8 (6)	16.4 (10)	60.7 (37)	6.6 (4)	6.6 (4)
Standard/Patents	6.6 (4)	18 (11)	62.3 (38)	6.6 (4)	6.6 (4)
Research Reports	21.3 (13)	27.9 (17)	44.3 (27)	1.6 (1)	4.9 (3)

highlights that most of the students use the internet and also ask their friends or classmates to fulfil their information needs. Only 18% (n=11) students said that they never use the library catalogue or OPAC. However, 27.9% (n=17) of the students responded that they never ask the librarian or library staff when they need information regarding their studies.

Frequency and Purpose of Library Visits

Table 5 reveals that most of the students, 37.7% (n=23) visit the library whenever it is required. While 21.3% (n=13) students visit the library daily, similar visits occur once a week.

Table 6 highlights that (27.9%, n=17) international students visit the library sometimes to get books issued or returned. More than 34% of students often visit the library to consult reference sources. The percentage of students who go to the library with the purpose of studying books is about 31. The table

reveals that more than 34% of international students never visit the library to read newspapers.

Awareness and Use of Information Sources

Table 7 shows that most of the international students are aware of journals, e-journals, books, e-books, reference materials, online databases, theses and dissertations, and research reports. However, in the case of audio-visual material, conference proceedings, and standards and patents, international students have less awareness.

Table 7 reveals that most of the respondents never used journals (32.8%, n=20) or e-journals (36.1%, n=22). Books and e-books are the resources used by international students the most frequently. About 28% of the respondents used research reports often to acquire the needed information. The study observed that the majority of the international students never used audio-visual materials,

conference proceedings, standards, or patents to get information.

Table 8 reveals that most of the students are satisfied with resources such as journals, e-journals, books, e-books, reference material, online databases, and theses and dissertations. A small number of students are dissatisfied with some of the available resources in the library, including audio/visual material, conference proceedings, standards, and patents. The study observed that the most neutral approach is seen among the international students towards audio-visual materials, standards, and patents, followed by conference proceedings.

Barriers and Problems in Using Library Resources and Services

International students face many difficulties in using information sources and meeting their information needs. Sometimes they face the inadequacy of library resources. Outdated study material is also one of the barriers. The analysis of Table 9 shows that 26.2% (n=16) respondents said that they have to face the challenge of delay in information delivery occasionally. The multilingual structure of information is also one of the barriers they occasionally face. Sometimes, 27.9% (n=17) found library materials disorganized. Apart from these, 27.9% (n=17) found library staff non-cooperative, and 27.9% (n=17) faced a lack of modern gadgets occasionally. Similarly, 23% (n=14) respondents faced the problems of slow internet speed, 29.5% (n=18) found a limited number of computers, and a lack of transportation to the library sometimes. Despite various barriers and problems, most international students have a neutral approach to the utilisation of information sources.

Suggestions and Recommendations

At the end of the questionnaire, international students were asked to submit their suggestions for improving library services. Some of the points could be followed by the Kahn Singh Nabha Library to improve its library system. The most common recommendation is related to the adoption of a multilingual system in the library. Some key inputs provided by the respondents are as follows:

- a) There should be detailed guidelines in English about how to use the library, as well as about its facilities to help international students.
- b) The Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library should adopt a multilingual system, and the library staff must be able to communicate in English.
- c) The organisation of awareness programmes regarding the utilization of library resources would help students and research scholars gain more out of their time in the library.
- d) A student should be able to make individual requests to learn library technology, and the librarian must help and teach them individually.
- e) Modern communication gadgets should be added to the library.

Some respondents believe that during the examinations, they found a limited number of seats in the library reading hall. Therefore, seating capacity in Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library should be increased. The suggestions from the respondents show that the surveyed university library has yet to improve its information system and requires user education programmes to enhance awareness and utilisation of information sources among international students.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, the majority of students consult books and teachers or supervisors for information pertaining to their studies. Most of the students visit the library whenever it is required. The purpose of their visits to the library includes preparing for examinations, browsing the internet, and consulting books and reference materials. The majority of international students are familiar with a variety of information sources, including books, e-books, journals, reference materials, theses and dissertations, and research reports. The two most often used information sources are books and e-books. The majority of the students are satisfied with the resources available in the Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library. The slow internet speed, a limited number of computers, the inadequate physical facilities, and the delay in information delivery are some of the major barriers and problems faced by international students. In the light of the findings of

this study, it is recommended that the library should organise an orientation programme for international students and scholars at the beginning of the session. International students will benefit from a focused orientation programme that will help them make better use of information resources and services.

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